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ABSTRACT

A case study was conducted of a teacher participating in a course for teachers designed to help them create partnerships for learning with students. The Curriculum for Possibilities (CFP) is an in-service course in which teachers examine their underlying beliefs, decisions, and behaviors that dictate their styles and the context of possibilities for their students. The participant was a junior high school Spanish teacher enrolled in the CFP course. In addition to examining the changes experienced by the teacher, the study also explored ways to adapt the CFP course to make it more effective. The teacher was observed as a student in the CFP course and as a teacher in her classroom. The teacher began connecting with her students, with whom she initially had many disciplinary problems, after reflecting in the class on what school meant to her as a student. Her attitudes toward her colleagues improved, and she became more open to forming a partnership for learning with her students. Among the suggestions for improving the CFP class was establishing a one-on-one teacher-coach relationship to help the teacher develop as a practitioner of CFP pedagogy. Another recommendation is to obtain a baseline assessment of the teacher's class from the school's principal and then follow this with an assessment at midterm of the difference the course is making. (Contains 24 references.) (SLD)

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ED 432 633

Masters Action Research Project

PARTNERSHIP IN THE CLASSROOM

...from hierarchical management to shared leadership

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I. Introduction

Unknowingly, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. triggered my journey onto the road of becoming a teacher-researcher. That shocking event turned into a wake-up call to pursue my passion, and to stop allowing the quest for status and salary to dictate the direction of my life. Within a year of that tumultuous event, I quit my professional engineering job in the aerospace industry to learn about my cultural roots. I attended workshops at a Harlem theatre company, then, changed my career focus to be of service to my community.

As a staff member of the theatre, I became immersed in the creation of an innovative theatre art form that involved spirituality, music, ritual and audience participation. In this artistry I was more than a performer. I was a *Liberator*. My objective was to remove the psychic distance between audience and stage, so that everyone would participate as one family. Much of the time, my character performed in the aisles, interacting with the audience as a catalyst for them to participate. Unbeknownst to me, I had begun to sow the seeds for my eventual inquiry into coaching teachers and students to be partners in the process of learning.

As I became a competent performer in this style of theatre, I joined with accomplished singers and dancers, and excelled in acting-the-fool and poetically encouraging people to go beyond their fears and differences to embrace the essence of our relatedness - self love. I had the opportunity to perform in many urban American cities, the Caribbean Islands, South America and Africa. During the '70s and '80s, I developed the skills to instruct other performers in this new theater technique, which was termed "God-Conscious Art" (Teer, 1972).

In the early nineties I began to consult New York Youth At-Risk, Inc. (NYYAR) to design and deliver its programs to troubled youth. It was a natural transition for me, as a Liberator, to refine the scope of my work by taking on NYYAR's mission to reduce the at-risk behavior of youth and increase the effectiveness of the parents and professionals who worked with them. In 1994, I completed my 25-year career with the National Black Theatre and

accepted the position of Director of Programs at NYYAR. The change opened the opportunity to work in partnership with my wife, who serves NYYAR as Executive Director.

One of my first tasks was to facilitate the completion of the curriculum being designed for teachers who taught at-risk students, distinguished as disruptive, truant, and failing academically. The idea of a course had evolved out of the NYYAR's commitment to expand its capacity to reach more at-risk youth, by enhancing teacher effectiveness. The purpose of the course was to develop teachers to discern orderliness within [the illusion of] classroom chaos; and to create environments conducive to establishing learning partnerships between teachers and their students. The course rested on the philosophical underpinnings that 1) youth do as you do, not as you say do; 2) there are no bad young people - young people make irresponsible choices and take bad actions; and 3) youth take actions commensurate with the future that they see for themselves.

These three underpinnings had evolved out of the original "Breakthrough Technology" that spawned life-altering programs in 1983 to gang members in cities across the country. The technology was based on "self-transformation" which offered a shift in paradigms from the common sense thinking that the future has to be determined by circumstances, to futures are created in the present through languaging. One of the origins of this technology is the theory that people invent themselves through language, i.e. via declarations, assertions, promises and requests (Spinosa, Flores, & Dreyfus, 1997; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Searle, 1968). An example of this kind of language can be found with the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson wrote a declaration in the midst of oppositional circumstances and had no evidence that it could become a reality. Then, he and others that signed and spoke the declaration, began to live into and take action consistent and inside the integrity of that declaration.

NYYAR developed an approach that cultivates youth to practice that their words are powerful, and how they speak about themselves in relationship to their circumstances is what matters. For example, let's say something stressful happened at age 8, and in response to the

stress, a youth made a declaration never to trust anyone again. Henceforth, the action that correlates to that declaration is to always observe and interpret that people can not be trusted.

To bring this paradigm into existence with practices, Youth At-Risk uses the process of self-reflection. All the training activities have specific measurable results and are explored within the reflective process. A typical one-year program is driven by personal projects that youth complete, with the assistance of a mentor. Mentors are trained to continue the reflective process, mentoring youth to observe themselves as being at-cause in the matter of their lives, not as victims of circumstances.

NYYAR comprehensive programs are composed of three operational phases. The three-month, first phase comprises enrollment and training of adult mentors. The one month, second phase starts with enrollment and training of youth who can see that if they continue their behavior for the next five years, they will end up dead, in jail, homeless or some other undesired place. We deliver a four-day curriculum at a campsite to the youth with their mentors in attendance. By the end of the four day, each youth can see that many times throughout their lives, they have made declarations to fight, not to try, not to care, not to participate, etc. Since then, they have reinforced those silent (yet loud) declarations. They can also observe that they interpret life and draw conclusions about themselves, which are usually declarations, such as, I don't matter, I am not worth it, I don't count, etc. They begin to see that it is these unobserved declarations also give rise to actions.

In the remaining ten months, the process continues by having mentors make biweekly calls and visits with the youth, and monthly program training and coaching sessions. The youth practice creating "breakthrough" results in areas where they have not been winning, e.g. family, peer and school relationships.

Working with the guidel nes for an in-service course at the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the curriculum for teachers reconfigured the four-day residential conversations and activities into forty-minute segments, especially for the school classroom. A voluntary group of

school teachers of various grade levels helped develop the course. By 1996, the course had received UFT approval and was offered under the category of Classroom Management, as the *Curriculum For Possibilities* (CFP). The Education Department of the City College of New York also offered it in its 1997 summer institute as *Preparation for the Authentic Classroom* (PAC). From 1996 to 1999, six CFP and two PAC were offered which approximately 160 teachers and guidance counselors completed, affecting four thousand students.

I conducted the first six courses and supervised the facilitators of the last two. While leading the courses, I developed a curiosity about the lives of the teachers and guidance counselors who sat in my classroom. I could see that unlike the professional NYYAR facilitators (one a middle school counselor and the other a high school special education teacher), the CFP teachers were unable to observe or intervene in their moods of cynicism and resignation. Many expressed their unhappiness and seemed depressed in their careers. I began to be interested in the factors that contributed to the torpid brownout and oncoming burnout. In experiencing the suffering of both the students and teachers, I suspected that a major factor must be environment, not only the physical (as Kozol decried quite outrageously in *Savage Inequalities*), but primarily, the mental moods and emotional tone. My commitment to being a catalyst in the liberation from suffering compelled me to look for partners.

As CFP was proving to be a success in the classroom, I thought that perhaps by learning the fundamentals of teacher training, I would see how I could legitimate NYYAR's curriculum as a necessary aspect of teacher preparation. Inspired, I applied to Teachers College (TC). As I studied and talked with successful teachers at TC, and gave the weekly effort to increase the sustainability of the CFP teachers, I became interested in what the Curriculum For Possibilities course required of teachers, to continue being learning partners. I wondered if the teachers could replicate the success of the NYYAR facilitators, who constantly practiced the reflective process and examined life from "being at-cause in the matters of their classroom."

Meanwhile, I innovated in the CFP by visiting two teachers in their classrooms to observe and coach them as they worked through one of the CFP themes. My findings revealed the battles that teachers wage against interruptions by school administrators, linear seating arrangements, short 35 minute periods, overcrowding, and the labels affixed to students. I assessed that the emotional tone was a pervading sense of defeat, cynicism, hopelessness and pretense. I began to wonder about the spectrum of emotions that teachers experience to be able to create learning partnership with their students. What were the declarations giving rise to the emotional climate in the classroom and what would it take to liberate teachers from them? These questions became the focus of the action research project presented in this paper.

Background to the research question

I visited a classroom to observe and coach a CFP teacher work with her eighth grade class. Instead, I found Mr. Smith, substituting for her. He was an African American in his middle twenties. As I entered, he was in the midst of shouting at one of the African-American male students, "Turn around and face me! Do you want me to get black on you?!!! I don't want to have to f... you up!!!" The student, George, complied, but turned the whole desk around to face Mr. Smith, at which point Mr. Smith began to shake up and down in an awful agitated fashion, and scream, "Okay, you're going to the Principal's office!!!" The undertone from the other students got loud: "He's bugged. All he knows is go to the Principal's office. You're crazy! You stupid @#&*!!"

Mr. Smith was unaware I had entered the room, but as I stepped forward, he did not flinch. Before I moved, I was wrestling with the integrity issue of being a researcher and intervening. However, my sense of indignity would not let me just sit and observe this confrontation. I introduced myself as a researcher who the class knew, and asked if he would mind me speaking to George privately. He gave me permission, at which point, George

jumped up and said, "I'm going to the Principal's office. He doesn't have the right to curse at me." And he stormed out.

I followed George into the hallway and we talked. With tears continually flowing, he threatened to go tell his Uncle. George said, "All I said was Kiwi Coco Pop. It's the name of the dog in the story he asked us to read. I thought it was funny. I read it out loud and laughed. I never heard a dog named Kiwi Coco Pop. I am going to tell my Uncle to come over here and mess him up. He has no right to talk to me like that."

At that moment, shouting in the classroom spilled out into the hallway, and three boys came out yelling, "He says we need to go to the Principal's office." Then, two teachers, who apparently knew these students, came out of their classrooms from across the hall. Mr. Smith shouted, "They want to know if I'm gay. We're going to the Principal's office. That's where this question about my sexuality is going to be answered."

One of the teachers yelled at the boys, "What are you here for? This is baby stuff. Don't you know you are in the eight grade? Get in here and sit in my classroom!" At this point, Mr. Smith went back into his classroom.

I stayed with George a while longer, asking him to look at the consequences that his Uncle might have to face for messing up a teacher. Then, George said, "I ought to tell the Principal that this guy cursed at me". And at that very moment, the Principal passed through the hall, glanced at me and George, and kept walking. The boy then said quietly, "The Principal wouldn't listen to me anyway. He'd just take the teacher's side."

I returned to the classroom leaving George in the hallway to decide which direction he'd rather go in, doing what it takes to pass this class or doing something else. The tension continued until the end of the two period class. Mr. Smith snapped instructions and the students complied in a mood of reluctance. George reentered the class.

At the bell, the class rushed the door. Mr. Smith stood firm collecting assignments. As George was leaving, Mr. Smith said, "It didn't have to go that far. You got a brain. Use it."

George just nodded his head and left. Mr. Smith held one student over. He told the student "You got two options, do the work now or go to the Principal's office with me." Five minutes of bargaining went by. "Now or the Principal's". I entered the standoff, encouraged the student to consider that of the two options, doing the work now would get him what he wanted, without damage. With reluctance, the student did the work inside of three minutes and exited.

Afterwards Mr. Smith and I talked. He told me that this was a typical day for him, just that it was a little trying because he had two periods, back to back with the same class. Leaving the building I ran into one of the teachers who came out into the hallway. She related how unexpected the incident was, but also said she was not surprised to see substitutes get treated that way. The next day, I called the Principal to share what I had witnessed. Two weeks later, I was told that Mr. Smith no longer substitutes in the Middle School. He had been reassigned to an elementary school.

Reflecting on this scenario, I assessed that the most important concern in the room was control. The emotional tone was antagonistic, confrontational, and demeaning. I remember having substitute teachers in my junior and high school classes. It was usually a shame how we acted, and we were the track 1 students. Substitute teachers usually meant "time-out from learning", but not always. Recently, in a course this semester at TC, a doctoral student was a substitute and my immediate reaction was "I can go home early, this is going to be a waste of my money and time". I turned that declaration around though when I thought about the money and engaged the substitute in a insightful conversation about the regular professor's life work.

So, the challenge to create learning partnerships includes preparation of substitute teachers. They do not have lots of time to establish an environment for learning partnerships. They are like stand-up comedians – they must create amenable relationships instantly.

On further reflection, I can see that the teachers who broke up the hallway scene were operating in a paradigm of control. They just commanded the students into their classrooms. No teacher addressed the students underlying concerns, that I speculate were about avoiding

being dominated, doing meaningful work, having fun, and being respected. I could see that each teacher had a "classroom" world to deal with, where s/he was lord. I suspect these two ways of being are barriers to creating learning partnerships. What and who could shift a person from playing the role of being the Lone Ranger, operating from a teacher control paradigm? My study seeks to offer some answers to this inquiry, in hope that classrooms are spared dramatic and brutally stressful events like this.

Overview of the Curriculum For Possibilities Course (CFP)

The CFP course was designed from the work NYYAR developed to give at-risk youth the opportunity to transform the direction and quality of their lives. The CFP adheres to the underpinning that *students do like you do, not like you say do.* Therefore, the CFP teacher attempts to model learning partnerships with teachers who are students in the course, so that the teachers will emulate the possibility of creating similar learning partnerships with their young students. Along the way, the natural chaos of learning is needed, in order for teachers to develop the ability to discern orderliness within it. The natural chaos is reflected in the students' moods when they are being challenged, searching for answers, frustrated, wondering off the known into the unknown, and into the abyss of spontaneity and innovation. The CFP course creates this environment with dignity, integrity and a commitment for each person to experience a breakthrough.

This Curriculum was developed with distinctions and activities to identify and constitute a class as a team, having players and a coach. Each person becomes a stakeholder in the team playing to win. The game is for each person to accomplish the possibility that s/he sees. The class is responsible for creating the conditions for everyone to win. In the CFP, the students and teacher develop an ontological observer - an ability to observe their thoughts and way of behaving, which determines whether they move forward or away from winning the game.

The CFP course is typically scheduled from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. once per week for 12 sessions. Up to 25 teachers may attend. The CFP curriculum is thematically structured. Teachers are evaluated with midterm and final exams. The teachers ongoing assignment is to facilitate a selected class through all ten themes. During a typical CFP session, teachers report on what has happened with their assignment, receive coaching, experience mock facilitation with the class, and learn the development of a new theme.

The themes are designed for a cross-cultural, gender friendly, homogeneous age groups(success has been demonstrated across the spectrum of grades from Kindergarten to twelfth). The outcome of each theme is as follows:

Theme 1: Creating a mood for partnership between teacher and students.
The central conversation is to share the possibilities that the course offers and allow the students to choose one of them. The possibilities that the course offers are

- A team effort in achieving goals
- A collective ownership of the rules of conduct
- Reduced competition among students
- Recognition of individual's value
- Higher grade point averages
- Increased attendance

Theme 2: Creating maps of successful futures

In this process, students visualize a successful year in school. Then, they transform the idea into pictures and drawings, to have specific measurable results in a visual collage form, that is mounted on the classroom wall for the rest of the year.

Theme 3: Inventing one game to all win, becoming a team, creating winning conditions.
The roles of players and coach are distinguished and the coach facilitates the players to create the conditions through which they will play together. For example: Be on time, listen when another speaks, etc. Theme 3 extends into

practicing restoring trust and dignity, when team members fall short of keeping the conditions.

Theme 4: Introducing the idea that all actions arise from thoughts.
Using the metaphor of a puppet show the participants are guided to begin to observe the conversations that the audience, puppeteers and puppets have and where they come from. Puppets are reactive, responding to the thoughts of the puppeteer. The result is that the participants begin to observe when they operate in school as puppets or puppeteers.

Theme 5: Observing thoughts
Expands on the ability to be an observer of specific recurring private conversations that show up during the school day. These thoughts are like preprogrammed radio stations, with accompanying mood and behaviors. When the records play, they demonstrate learned behaviors. They land on thoughts, which we call "walkman" stations, e.g., I'm tired, It's lunch time, we got a substitute - let's play, etc, and their behavior is programmed for a particular response. The lesson focuses on developing new stations, or new behaviors for old stations.

Theme 6: Developing trust.
Through physical activities that require trust of self and another, the participants come up against their trust threshold with the opportunity to go beyond their self-imposed limits, or put another way, switch their walkman station. This involves having on blind folds and rocking back into another's arms.

Theme 7: Going beyond knowing
The focus is on how past knowing gives participants the illusion that they listen as if they know everything already. This experience opens the realm of possibility thinking. The conversation unfolds to reveal thinking that you know

you know and you know you don't know, to discover what you don't know that you know and you don't know that you don't know. This theme extends into the practical use of accessing possibility thinking by struggling to solve a 9 dot puzzle.

Theme 8: Going beyond where you normally stop.
Students visualize personal situations and secrets, recalling a time when something went wrong that stopped them from fully participating in school with joy peace and trust. The result is to have the participants hear the decisions they made and behavior(s) they adopted, that came from their interpretation of what happened. This follows the conversation of being able to observe thoughts, having the choice to switch walkman stations or become the puppeteer rather than the puppet.

Theme 9: Overcoming the saboteurs
Students declare specific measurable results, and imagine the kinds of situations and thoughts that will sabotage their progress to accomplish them. With the assistance of the group, students construct scenarios and practice what it will take to overcome routine ways of thinking and behaving, that they take for granted.

Theme 10: Acknowledging accomplishment
This lesson provides the opportunity to assess results and acknowledge accomplishment.

Formal evaluation of the mastery of the teachers in CFP occurs through the midterm and the final. The midterm requests teachers to give a one page response to one of the three underlying philosophical principles: 1)there are no bad children, they make irresponsible choices and take bad actions; 2)young people do like you do, not like you say do; or 3)youth

take actions correlate to the future they see for themselves. Along with the oral presentation of the midterms, the teachers also exhibit their student's success maps.

The final is a two to three page take home exam asking teachers to report the accomplishments of their class regarding reaching each students specific measurable results, and note which CFP theme had the most impact. Teachers also are asked to report their observations of behavioral shifts and relationships of two students in detail. And lastly, they are asked to report the themes that were turning points in their success with students.

When we look for the success of CFP, midterm exams report significant breakthroughs, as follows:

Example: Young people do not do as you say, they do as you do.

> In my experience as a teacher, it has become very clear to me that "students do as you do, not as you say do." Since the school year began, I have been drilling my students not to eat or drink in my classroom. However, this message never seemed to make an impact. My natural reaction was that my students were being rebellious and that they didn't see any relevant reason for me not wanting them to eat in the classroom. So, they ignored my demands. As we continued going through the different themes and conditions of workability, one of my students stood up and said "It is not fair for you to tell us not to eat or drink in class but yet every morning during silent reading you sit and drink your coffee." All the other students cheered and applauded this student, and it became clear to me that I was asking them to follow a [condition] that I myself [did not abide by] daily. I though that they were clear that since I was the teacher, I didn't have to adhere to classroom [conditions].
>
> After this incident, I made a commitment to never eat or drink in the classroom during class. Since that time, the number of incidents has greatly

reduced. And the students make sure I also adhere to the rules or conditions of workability that we set up.

Example "There are no bad children. Children make irresponsible choices and do bad things":

Society, parents and sometimes teachers tend to label children as bad, hopeless and "accidents waiting to happen". Looking back on my early years as a teacher, I realize that I too was guilty of labeling children as good/bad, academic or non-academic. The more experience I gained and the more interest I developed in my students, hence bonding with them strongly, I realized that there are reasons children behave the way they do. Conducting the weekly sessions (CFP) with my students have proven that students' attitudes can and do change when they are listened to and are a part of the action. They do have opinions of their own and if we listen to them, guide them and reason with them, maybe they'll consider making the right choices, especially their choice of friends.

If children are properly guided at home and at school and if they have good role models to emulate, they could set goals for themselves and work at achieving them. They should be constantly reminded of the goals they have set, and the importance of attaining achievement. There are especially four students in my class, who since kindergarten, have been known as terror - non-learners, behavior problems. Now that they are with me, I've tried to reason with them, showing them that they are good kids, but the things they do overshadow their ability to be good and to succeed. They are gradually developing self-esteem, behaving better and trying very hard with their lessons. I have not yet written a referral for any of them, and everyone, including past teachers, marvel at the

way they cooperate, sit in class instead of roaming the hallways and above all show respect to their peers and adults.

Some of these children are from homes where one or both parents are in a drug rehabilitation center or in jail. To the youth this life is patterning the norm, so they end up making bad choices, getting involved in drugs, promiscuity, vandalizing properties and becoming pregnant. For example, foster children believe that no one cares for , nor understands them. In soliciting attention they do things that they themselves know to be unacceptable but, they do them anyway. This is their way of calling out for help. They want to be a part of what is good, but need to be accepted, encouraged and nurtured. In discussing conditions that will make plans work in the classroom, home or community, children see the need for the team to work together with the teacher acting as coach . This is evidenced in a cooperative learning setting where the teacher acts as a coach, giving instructions, and the team, players with different responsibilities, carry out an assignment. As a result of these sessions, students are less confrontational , fight less and now see the need to work hard at lessons, becoming better human beings and have set tangible goals for themselves.

Example: Actions that young people take, correlate to the future they see for themselves.

One of the underpinnings of the CFP course is that the "actions young people take, directly correlate tot he future they see for themselves." My experience in delivering the five themes to my guidance support group has shown that if our young people can see more success possibilities outside the "boxes" they are confined to, they may change their course of actions now.

The new immigrant students I am working with are different from the at-risk students born in this country. However, many of them are truly at-risk in

their frustrating struggle for survival in this totally new cultural, social and education system. They are so confined to the "nine-dot boxes" that many feel hopeless for their future. When I did the theme "going beyond what we already know" the students in the group were able to come up with a long list of boxes in which they live. They observed being in the box of a new immigrant, unable to speak English, different from American kids, unfamiliar with American culture, having to work to support the family, unable to find a mainstream job, having to work in a Chinese restaurant or a garment factory, being an illegal immigrant, or being a victim of discrimination.

The real excitement of the discussion, however, came when I asked them to go beyond the nine-dot boxes for other possibilities. I told them for three years in a row, the valedictorians of the graduating classes at the High School for Humanities have been newly arrived immigrants. All of them are former Liberty High School students. All of them are now studying at Columbia University. I told my group, "When those students came to Liberty, they were exactly the same as you, being confined to the nine -dot boxes. What they have done was to go beyond the boxes to look for possibilities of success. This country provides opportunities for everyone, immigrants or the native -born. They have made it. I am sure you will be able to make it too"

The group was stunned. After a heated discussion, the boy who wanted to learn enough English to be a waiter at a fancy restaurant asked me if he could remove the picture of the restaurant from [his] success map and replace it with a picture of a math textbook. "I want to pass the Regents Exam for MQ2 by the end of this school year," he said.

This paper will report the findings of a case study of one teacher, who like those above, participated in the CFP course and used the themes explored in the CFP course and in her own

classroom. The purpose of the case study was to understand the internal changes that occurred for the teacher, as she became a learning partner with her students.

This study also follows the development of a teacher 's relationship with the researcher/coach as she introduces shared leadership and responsibility to her class. I will attempt to build a working partnership with her in the context of her Spanish class. In the new millennium, I foresee educators exercising the right to transform, as Schoonmaker asserts, the image of classroom control from one where the teacher is an authoritarian who keeps control, to an image that ties control to curriculum planning and child development (Schoonmaker, 1998). This study reports on the integration of ideas and practices of the teacher during her teaching in the classroom.

Data were collected through field notes in the CFP classroom and the teacher's classroom, through initial interviews, questionnaires with students, and notes of telephone conversations with the teacher over a six week period of time. Before presenting the methodology and findings of the study, I will review the literature related to the question of how teachers learn to be partners with students.

II. Literature Review

I have been privileged to listen to teachers talk with each other about stress, burn-out, and safety - both physical and emotional. These concerns translate into career longevity, absenteeism, and job anxiety and job satisfaction. To persevere in the new millennium, the comprehensive teacher will need a repertoire of competencies to develop as a partner in learning with her students, an inventory of personal knowledge that frees her to be fully expressed and effective, and a working relationship with a partnership coach.

What teachers go through to become competent teachers in the classroom may require them to adjust the theory and practical delivery learned in a teacher college. Indeed, the nature of the urban classroom calls for a substantial investment of teacher competence in classroom management techniques and multicultural sensitivity. In addition, teachers' own knowledge base, values and belief systems may be insufficient to the challenge of the classroom situated in an impoverished, high crime, ethnically diverse and unsafe neighborhood.

Yet, helping teachers achieve a new relationship with students is a daunting challenge. The teacher may have no relational experience to such an environment and the values and concerns of the students. Before a teacher makes changes, a lot of struggle to get students to conform may occur. Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon observed that the prior beliefs of beginning teachers are very difficult if not impossible to change, a view unchallenged since the time of Lortie (1975). ...We believe that the fixed nature of prospective teachers beliefs should remain an open question rather than an accepted assumption (Wideen, 1998).

The mandate for urban public schools calls for new environments to promote inclusion on all levels: culture, gender, ethnicity, learning disabilities, age differences, etc. Preparing teachers to create environments that nurture this diversity requires a radical shift from the platform from which teachers relate to students. The content knowledge base takes second seat to the pedagogy and environments for learning. Paulo Freire characterized the pedagogy of teaching in Brazil as the *banking concept* , in which teachers make deposits of knowledge and students act as the

depositories. Freire recommended that relationships undergo a radical shift from the authority "know it all" teacher into an environment in which both teacher and student are learners:

> From the outset, her [the teacher's] efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. [The teacher's] efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them (Freire, 1970).

Historical Framework

Mark Twain once said "don't let schooling get in the way of your education". A century later, schooling is still a political concern. Classrooms are not governed by teachers, but by those with political power - business people and politicians. To track the evolution of classroom management is to follow the manipulation of structure and policy, administratively. Being employees of the state government, teachers have followed policy and procedures given to them. Management of classroom enrollment has evolved from expulsion to separation over the 146 years of public schooling in America. Very little responsibility was assigned the teacher. Therefore, research literature is scarce about what happened personally as a teacher succeeded or failed in managing a classroom well.

The Common School Movement, led by Henry Barnard and Horace Mann, initiated Massachusetts and New York, in 1852 and 1853, respectively, to adopt the nation's first compulsory education laws. The industrial revolution was creating huge cities. To compensate for the absence of family values and morals adhered to in an agrarian way of life, Mann's Whig Party expounded that a population's industrial capabilities were related to its educational level (Church, 1976). The Movement institutionalized a form of social control in the impersonal industrialized urban cities. While business and political concerns had a dynamic hand in shaping

the educational system, in the early days, classroom deportment was managed through expulsion policies.

From the beginning, education could be viewed as an imposition, a tool or a privilege. Rarely, was education a choice for students. The same views applied to teachers who traditionally have been hewed from either women, minorities or lower class males (Griffin, 1996).

Until the late 1800's teachers handled unruly or unmanageable students through attrition. Students would drop out quietly or be forced out. To keep the teachers satisfied, school administrators followed policy to exclude unacceptable students through the incentive of easy to get work permits. During the 1840's to 1860's, the ideas of "normal distribution" and the Bell Curve, espoused by Sir Francis Galton in England, led directly to the invention of IQ and scholastic testing. Unofficially, "labeling" of students helped manage the normal classroom. Special classrooms began to appear for the *incorrigible*, *backward* and otherwise *defective* pupils (Tropea, 1987). When child labor laws were passed, hundreds of youth were returned to schools. Through teacher referrals, in-school segregation separated the good from the bad students.

In the early 1900's, a national concern with "laggards" erupted. Students seen as causing retardation became a problem in rating the efficiency of schools. A report by Professor George D. Strayer in 1921 led to the practice of "passing on" students regardless of performance and even using trial promotion to advance borderline students, both of which increased the numbers of marginalized students. As a way of managing placement, teachers and school administrators invented special classrooms like the child guidance clinic, psycho-educational clinic, Z children room, dull normal first graders room, revocational education room and adjustment classes to keep internal stability in the normal classroom (Tropea, 1987).

During the depression of the 1930's new administration policies dealing with youth who were perceived as "perpetrators of social chaos" took the form of early referrals for young students, while the options to control the older students seemed exhausted. The practice of

exclusion from school re-emerged during World War II. While more students withdrew to go to work, suspensions and toleration of non-attendance were practiced.

The diagnostic model to determine special education privileges grew out of parents in the 1950's. Laws were passed mandating special classes and care for students with learning disabilities. In the special education arena, it is interesting to note that students suspected of learning disabilities were evaluated through a *diagnostic process* and those suspected of giftedness, were assessed through an *identification process*. The shifts in special education has turned toward more inclusionary practices rather that exclusionary with the work of Tannenbaum regarding definitions of potential giftedness (Tannenbaum, 1983) and Gardner with regard to multiple intelligence (Traut 1998). It bothers me to observe the wasted brilliance of students in special education curricula, isolated from gifted and regular classrooms, because teachers can not manage their behavior.

In the middle 1990's, the practices of diagnosing, labeling and placing students into special education classes prompted the New York State Commissioner of Education to call for a stop in this practice, because special education students were labeled in terms that many experts said, "were so loosely applied that they provide cover for teachers who want to get rid of troublesome students from their classroom" (New York Times, 1996).

Recent research on Classroom Management

The key factors that influence the development of the study of classroom management skills have been: lack of discipline, racial desegregation, effectiveness in teaching, and studies of the late 60's (Doyle, 1986). The concerns that classroom management has been addressing are mainly establishing and maintaining order.

In 1984 a ten member panel on the Preparation of Beginning Teachers, issued a report that teachers needed expertise in three major areas: 1) knowledge of how to manage a classroom, 2)

knowledge of subject matter, and 3) understanding of their students sociological backgrounds (Carnegie Fdn, 1984).

The working definition of classroom management that has guided teachers since 1988 is the following:

> Good classroom management implies not only that the teacher has elicited the cooperation of the students in minimizing misconduct and can intervene effectively when misconduct occurs, but also that worthwhile academic activities are occurring more or less continuously and that the classroom management system as a whole (which includes, but is not limited to, the teacher's disciplinary interventions) is designed to maximize student engagement in those activities, not merely to minimize misconduct (Brophy, 1988).

This definition elicited teachers in 1998 to identify five competencies needed to implement a classroom management strategy:

> 1) a solid understanding of current research and theory on students' personal and psychological needs; 2) establishing positive teacher-student and peer relationships that create classrooms as communities of support; 3) using instructional methods that facilitate optimal learning by responding to the academic needs of individual students and the classroom group; 4) involving students in developing and committing to behavioral standards that help create a safe, caring community and facilitate clear classroom organization; 5) using a wide variety of counseling and behavioral methods that involve students in examining and correcting their inappropriate behavior (Jones & Jones, 1998).

However, I observe that as teachers develop these competencies, at the same time they are being indoctrinated into the school culture, which serves to undermine the intent. Where is the opportunity for teachers to examine their own thinking about teaching, in order for them to assess their preparation for teaching? For example, the common language of school culture is

interspersed with superstitions. How many teachers have ever reflected on the legitimacy of ideas like: don't smile until Christmas, can't be in control if you're nice, learning is not supposed to be fun, teaching is not supposed to be fun, I'm the teacher and I know - you're the student and you don't know, don't mix teaching with research? These are superstitions, which become the escape route from incompetence with handling student discipline, personal anxiety and imminent classroom chaos. Since, they are part of the teacher's culture, they deserve to be examined. As long as [beginning] teachers have not examined their beliefs, then students become teachers unable, and subconsciously unwilling, to affect a system in need of reform (Pajares, 1992).

Up to the 1980's, management and instructional designs [had] been inseparable (Doyle, 1986). Mechanical techniques, rules and procedures aided the collapse of domains into each other. Confusion existed not only in the classroom, but also in classroom management courses. Studies on classroom management are closely affiliated with research on effective teaching, teacher thinking and classroom discourse (Doyle, 1986). This old paradigm in which the teacher had to exercise control and authority in order to teach the subject, is no longer working in an urban society. There are now many different kinds of educators and mentors, such as, television, gang members, movies, rap stars, and sports stars, who model and influence students perceptions on how to deal with critical daily needs of safety, appearance, dignity, sexual behavior, fun money drug use, and having friends. If the students were a union, considering that the estimated dropout rate per year per high school grade is 40% - a strike is underway against teacher management in urban schools.

The concerns for effectively managing an urban classroom have become a teacher development issue. The call has gone out for classroom management that influences teacher effectiveness and well-being (Jones, 1996). A curriculum and pedagogy that fulfills this call has to work for the teacher, as well as the student. What's good for the goose must be good for the gander. I believe that CFP methodology answers the call, because through its approach, a teacher must first take the risk to shift her commitment in order to ask students to shift their commitment.

Imagine a teacher committed to being a learning partner, generating community and team with her Principal, her students' parents, her custodian, and her guidance counselors. Imagine an urban classroom with a teacher playing the role of coach, rather than referee. Imagine teachers playing a game for the entire school team to win.

In wake of easy gun access, and the spontaneous violence, not only in urban but suburban schools, teachers literally have career longevity at stake. The conditions for being a well trained teacher must be examined. The already, present anxiety within schools has been exacerbated. Examining one's own beliefs, and breaking out of the traditional paradigm is imperative, as Jersild saw 44 years ago:

> People who care to express themselves not only favor the idea of bringing anxiety out into the open for as full and frank a discussion as possible but are generally eager to have this done. ...with respect to the educator's task. Unless he grasps the concept of anxiety and understands, at least in part, how it might affect the child's private life and influence the learning and teaching process, the teacher will be unaware of a crucial factor in his work (Jersild, 1955).

One condition that creates anxiety is an unsafe environment. Another condition is distrust. Both conditions exist inside the hierarchical nature of school culture, between teachers and administrators, teachers and teachers, and teachers and students.

As America continues to shift the balance of diversity, the culture of power and control within schools seethes into view to be examined. (Delpit, 1988). I believe that this culture incubates within teachers. Therefore, reflection on experiences is necessary for developing a critical pedagogical mindset (Kanpol, 1997). To free oneself of the paradigm of traditional school culture, one avenue opened to teachers is to reconstruct teachers identity by going through the phases that Ford and Dillard outline as 1) deconstruction through critical self-reflection, 2) critical social consciousness and 3)critical social political action (Ford & Dillard, 1996). The possibility that teachers can take on the responsibility of inventing their future in the classroom,

school and community is exactly what the Curriculum for Possibilities course attempts to provide and guide teachers through, in order to facilitate their students to do the same, as this paper will illuminate. This direction is to break free of the paradigm of control and authority, and to expand the capacity of teachers and students to be learning partners in the classroom.

III. Method

Research Question

The central focus of this action research paper is to describe the spectrum of emotions and shifts in perspectives that a teacher experiences to create learning partnerships with students.

Why a case study?

I chose to do a case study because it allows for in depth conversations regarding the researcher's observations of a teacher's speaking and behavior. This approach opens access to what is behind the scenes of the interactions between the teacher and students. The case study requires the establishment of intimacy and trust between the researcher and teacher. Within this relationship, knowing when the teacher is stepping outside her comfort zone is possible. Through the case study the context of the teacher's life experience and context of being a teacher can be compared. And, lastly just for pure logistics the case study is appropriate for shadowing a teacher in multiple situations in order to track the coherence and continuity of learning that is going on in one classroom into another.

Settings and Participants

The case study involved the selection of one teacher participating as a student in the CFP course and teaching a public school class. The teacher would be observed as a student in the CFP course and as a teacher in her class while implementing the CFP curriculum.

1. Curriculum For Possibilities Course (CFP)

New York Youth At-Risk, Inc. with the support of teachers developed this course. The CFP is an authorized United Federation of Teachers in-service course, offering a 3 G credit toward a salary increase. In the CFP course

teachers begin to observe their underlying beliefs, decisions, and behaviors that daily dictate their style and the context of possibilities for their students.

2. The teacher's student classroom

The teacher of focus selected her 8th grade Spanish class to implement the CFP course. This class had 14 boys and 12 girls; sometimes a retired teacher mentor attended the class. The teacher taught this Spanish class five times in a week. We chose the Monday afternoon class as the time to observe her implementing the CFP.

3. Criteria for selection

The criteria for selecting the teacher for the case study was enrollment in the CFP course, expression of frustration and hopelessness with students in both academics and behavior, and willingness to take a risk. The teacher received permission from her principal to participate in the study.

Specific Data

1. Interviews

Informal pre and post interviews were conducted in order to learn more about the case study teacher's background, values, standards and concerns. Informal, ongoing interviews in the form of weekly phone calls and email, debriefings after her class and each CFP course were also conducted. The weekly telephone calls served as clearing conversations, which Ms. Krapulis would use to sound-off about situations and people that upset her. These conversations were long, sometimes a couple of hours, in which she would speak 75% of the time. The informal interviews were documented in a researcher journal.

2. Observations

Observations were made of the teacher's CFP class participation and her teaching of the 8th grade Spanish class. The focus of these observations was to observe the correlation in shifts demonstrated in the actions and speaking of the

teacher as a basis for generating shifts in the actions and speaking of her students. Field notes were recorded during and after each class.

3. Questionnaire
A questionnaire was used for three students and the teacher to compare the students' and teacher's perception of each other.

Questionnaire

1. When you first came into this class, what did you think about the teacher?
2. What do you think of her now?
3. What do you like most about the teacher?
4. What does the teacher do or say that bothers you?
5. What kind of student do you think the teacher sees you as?

attentive	troublemaker	chillin' smart	dumb
class clown	sneaky genius	loud	unruly
playful	peaceful	shy	reserved

6. Do you think the teacher wants you to pass?
7. What happens in class that makes the teacher lose control?
8. Do you think the teacher is a good teacher?
9. What High School is your first choice?
10. Is there anything you want to say that you haven't said about the teacher, or your relationship with the teacher?

4. Samples of her CFP work
Ms. Krapulis exhibited her student success maps, as well as her own success map. She completed her midterm exam paper.

5. My teacher researcher role

Ms. Krapulis's and I were aligned in that I would served as an observer and at the same time a coach to her in developing the themes with her class. She

informed her students that she was in my CFP class and I was observing her. In addition, there was another level of insight that occurred for me. Ms. Krapulis's complaints, resentments, missed appointments with me, absences, and lateness became breakdowns that assisted me to design the conversations to coach her to clear her upsets. Through my coaching of her in her classroom and on the telephone, and with the training that she received in CFP class, we developed as learning partners. At the same time she worked to create conversational environments for partnership with her colleagues and students.

Analysis

The multiple sources of data collection provided the opportunity to develop findings using triangulation. The observation of Ms. Krapulis in the CFP class provided a view of her relationships amongst her peers and as a student. The observation of Ms. Krapulis in her eighth grade Spanish classroom offered the vantage point of her performance and relationships as a teacher. The third view of her occurred in the interviews and debriefings. A fourth source was the interviews over the telephone, which I would call coaching and clearing conversations. The fifth source was the interviews with the three students, whose responses were compared to Ms. Krapulis' responses as to what she thought each student had said. Together, in sorting through all of these sources, a composite picture emerged of the beliefs that Ms. Krapulis was challenging .

IV. Findings

Choosing a teacher for the case study

How I chose Ms. Krapulis to be the teacher for my case study seemed rather coincidental, and deserves examination when I look back at the number of telephone conversations I had with her, to keep her enrolled in the project. At the end of the first CFP session, I announced to the class of 19 teachers that I was doing an action research project and needed a teacher for my case study. I told them that the project was about following the changes that a teacher experienced to become partners in learning with their students. I also told them that they would get the benefit of personal coaching from me, to help learn to facilitate the CFP in their class. I would observe the person during CFP sessions and visit his or her classroom once a week, for the next eight weeks. I also, told them that my preference was to work with a school in close proximity to my office at Madison and 26th.

Five teachers volunteered. One of the teachers informed me that she was very busy because she was taking a class in Hebrew to see how it is to learn a foreign language. She said, she was doing this to better understand her Spanish class students. Her comment instantly enrolled me. She was already practicing one of the underpinnings of the course, *Young people do like you do, not like you say do.* At the second class, I announced that Ms. Krapulis was the teacher for my case study.

I got to know Ms. Krapulis a little better in our initial interview over lunch. Her ancestry and cultural traditions were new to me and I was intrigued as to how they influenced her teaching. Ms. Krapulis came from a Sefardic Jewish home of Corsican-Spanish ancestry. She told me that Sefardic Jews had a history of living peacefully in Spain under Arab rule. Then, when the Christians took over, her people were enslaved and tortured during the Spanish inquisition. She was born in 1952 and was her family's third generation to grow up in America. In her own words she speaks of her people in the following way:

> Now, the Sefardim are a community within a community, which keeps a low profile
>
> even within the general Jewish population. Originally, the term "sefard" means "from Iberia". Traditionally, we assimilate quite easily compared to the Ashkenazi Jews. Our ritual rites, some prayers and customs are quite different. There was plenty of strife between both communities throughout history, here in US. In my parent's generation it was preferable to send their kids to Christian schools, than to send them with the Ashkenazi and other riff raff; intermarriage with non-Jews was reluctantly accepted but preferable to marrying an Ashkenazi; in turn, Ashkenazi still do not fully accept non-Yiddish speaking Jews as being real Jews!! If [you were]from the middle or lower middle classes at the turn of the century or pre-WWII, those families were able to afford tutors for their children. Girls were basically educated in needlework, running a home, and [received]minimum official schooling beyond basic ABC's and arithmetic. In my parents' generation they also had tutors but were more aware of improving their children's economic viability.

Even more interesting was that her parents thought that American public schools were the worst schools to attend for academics and discipline. So, Ms. Krapulis never attended public schools, even though an elementary school was directly across the street from where she lived. Instead, she walked a half mile to get to a parochial school and later rode buses to private schools. As a young student, she found learning languages to be a natural talent and learned Spanish, Greek and French, as well as Judezmo, the language of Sefardic culture. Her cultural identity is very much determined by language, as she explains in the following:

> So, Judezmo speaking Turks have some variation in language from Judezmo speaking Cubans or Judezmo speaking Greeks, etc. Some of us speak modern Spanish as well, but not everybody does. We do not identify as Hispanics, as

the term is used more commonly by some of the non-Jewish / Spanish descent population.

Ms. Krapulis never played team sports, and she dislikes most major sports, except for soccer. She had always been in individual activities as a student. She attended Columbia University and received a degree in Anthropology and Political Science. During her undergraduate years she married, had a son in 1975, left school for awhile, and came back to finish up in 1981. From 1982 – 83 she took a few courses at Teachers College, and began teaching at a school in Queens, New York. By 1985 her marriage had ended in divorce and she was living in Greece with her son. In Greece, she taught ESL.

Her generation is the first career-oriented one in her family. Opposition to this style of living has come from home, where women are traditionally raised to be totally dependent on father and/or husband. In '87 she returned to America to become a freelance interpreter/translator in the court system. Following this experience, she worked as a Junior manager for an oil tanker company on Madison Avenue. In 1993 company downsizing and her son's graduation from Stuyvesant High School, compelled her to seek a new career. However, she got involved in a legal battle with her former employer in claiming certain benefits and rights. They in turn put up a good nasty fight, which culminated in hearings, over a two-year period, before the NYS State Labor Department. Ultimately, the company blacklisted her. In 1996, after three years of hard financial times, as a home based computer consultant, and selling imported Mediterranean products to spiritually oriented stores, she sought a steady salary situation and decided to teach in public schools.

Current Situation

In subsequent conversations I found out that Ms. Krapulis had taught for two years in the public school system before arriving at Mason Middle School to teach Spanish. Ironically, she says, "I accepted the Board of Ed salary cut because I'm able to receive rent payments from a

home I still own in Greece. I would not have been able to keep my apartment in midtown and take care of other monthly expenses without this supplement." Now, in her second year as a full time public school teacher, she also doubled as a special education, resource room teacher for 4th graders. Four days a week, she was in school at 7:30 am, to instruct a class that she admits not trained to do. Financial times were again getting hard for her, because after nine weeks, neither teaching positions had paid her. She was currently investigating how to resign from the teachers' union, which was not advocating for payment of her salary.

Ms. Krapulis had a distrusting relationship with her Principal. She said, the Principal had not informed the outgoing Spanish Teacher that he was looking for a replacement. The teacher she replaced was fired on the first day of school, after having cleaned and dressed the classroom. Since her start, Ms. Krapulis never considered the classroom as her own, believing that she might also be fired suddenly. In addition, without asking her, the Principal had assigned a retired teacher mentor to her class one day a week. She did not know whether the mentor was there to spy on her or to help.

Perspective on her eighth grade Spanish class

Ms. Krapulis selected an eighth grade Spanish class to develop as learning partners. When I asked her to described the students, she used the following terms, "constant talker, incessant talker, potential leader, low-key survivor, little fellow, torn between two persona, shaping up, dazed, high absenteeism, respectful at all times, unpredictable behavior, emotional bomb, consuming hatred, very soft spoken, shy, needs improvement, couldn't care less about Spanish, easily distracted, wavering, can't make up his mind, visitor attitude, very immature, lacks self-confidence, knows self very well, tardiness problem, chooses to follow, and terrified." As I reflected, she interpreted that eighteen of the twenty seven students, or 66% demonstrated negative behaviors. I anticipated that these interpretations had become declarations, with which

her actions were consistent, creating the labels for a self fulfilling prophesy to occur (Hammons-Byrner, 1994).

She informed me that the letter "C" was a code label for a class ranked lowest in Math (but not necessarily in reading) of the three eighth grade classes. Ms. Krapulis classified the class as Spanish "B". They had received instruction in the Spanish language last year as well. There were 26 students - 14 boys, 12 girls. One of the students was repeating 8th grade. The average age was 13 years old.

Ms. Krapulis was aware of 30% of the class's backgrounds - conditions of family, living situations, and the students' home responsibilities. In particular, she talked about four boys of different ethnic backgrounds, showing "at- risk" behavior. If they behaved in character, I would easily notice them when I came to class. One boy was caught acting violently on school grounds against a fellow 8th grader, who was the only Asian male student (from an 8-A class) The boy was given a two-day in-house suspension and two months' "probation". He had produced no written nor oral work in-class nor homework. Another teacher at recent staff meeting, reported that the boy had toned down his attitude toward teachers since the suspension. Another boy displayed a certain degree of language and cultural barriers. This student's penmanship, spelling and syntax indicated (no more than) first grade competence in English.

She characterized two other boys as "roamers". It only took nanoseconds for my back to be turned before they left the room. These boys talked loud to each other from across the room. One's latest disruptive behavior was to make "zoo" sounds.

All of these assessments were present, when Ms. Krapulis chose to do this project. She wanted to be able to teach Spanish to this class of students who constantly cross talked and threw paper at each other, and even her sometimes. She was tired of using screams as the only effective tool to manage classroom behavior. She wondered out loud, "what will happen to me [as I become a learning partner with students]? Is it going to diminish my role [as a teacher]?" Does reducing competition mean that standards have to be lowered? Besides the students, everyday

was a battle against her own parent's opinion, echoing in her head about public schools not being a good place. So far, their opinion was winning. Here again, she was demonstrating that we exist in language and language gives rise to, or generates behavior.

My first visit to Ms. Krapulis' classroom

Two days after the initial interview, I made my first visit to Ms. Krapulis's classroom. It was on a Monday afternoon for a 2: 20 – 2: 50 class period. She had left my name at the front desk with security. As I climbed the three flights, my energy was rising in anticipation of meeting these potentially gifted young people and creating learning partnerships with them. These were the same kind of young people the NYYAR program worked successfully with. Ms. Krapulis assessments of them were not mine. Rather than try to tell her, I trusted the process to reveal their brilliance.

Upon entering the classroom I was met by a lot of eyes. The room was settled in an attentive mood to what Ms. Krapulis was saying. I sat down in the back near the sink and noticed that the physical environment was cluttered. In fact, the classroom was crowded with school desks and cabinets, and very little on the walls regarding Spanish. Directly opposite the entrance was the window side of the room. The beige, ragged shades were pulled half way down. In the far corner diagonally across from the entrance door, was a round desk, set aside as a reading space and cordoned off by a row of short book cases. Ms. Krapulis's desk, piled high with books and papers, was in the middle of the room in front of the windows. To the right of her desk were a cluster of four computers, which I recalled Ms. Krapulis saying to me, they were useless without the Internet. On the wall adjacent to the right of the door was the chalkboard. On the wall opposite the chalkboard were bulletin boards - bordered, but empty, except for a world map with Spain and other Spanish speaking countries highlighted. Lined against that wall was a row of short, but wide wooden cabinets.

The rest of the room area was filled with desks, arranged as three sides of a square, open to the chalkboard. About four rows of desks were inside the square. Empty closets that were once for coats, remained along the wall opposite the windows, to the immediate left of the door. Tucked in the back left corner was the utility sink, where I suspected students got water for drinking, washing and wet paper towel missiles.

Ms. Krapulis was sitting at a student desk in front of the chalkboard speaking Spanish to 25 students and to the retired teacher mentor, Mr. Hale. She moved to lean on a desk inside the square, to acknowledge that I was there, and that we should move into the lesson.

Ms. Krapulis asked the students to arrange the chairs in a circle in front of the desks. She began moving desks out of the way. As they moved about, the students exhibited reluctance, playfulness, and confusion. As the circle came together, three students were sitting outside the circle. Ms. Krapulis, noting this, asked if her instruction to sit in the circle was unclear. I whispered to her to ask the group what needed to happen to complete the circle, and would someone take the leadership to complete it. She asked them that and a couple of students said that the three boys in the back needed to sit in the circle.

We listened as a girl suggested that if everybody moved their chairs to the left, it would make room for three other chairs. No one moved. No one spoke. I whispered to Ms. Krapulis to ask them 'why not do it?" Instead, Ms. Krapulis asked one of the girls to move around. All the students moved around. The class was now in a tight oval arrangement. Ms. Krapulis had her CFP theme #1 development in hand, searching for what to say next. Cross talk caught her attention and she looked at the talkers. She admonished the talkers.

Then, she asked students to introduce themselves. I whispered to her to first introduce the course and herself. Then, I would introduce myself. Next, ask the teacher mentor. And finally, ask the students to introduce themselves. As she talked about the possibility of "reducing competition amongst themselves, I added the question, "What happens when people compete?" Students replied that someone had to lose when people compete. Somebody had to fail, and

people were bound to fail in this class. In her introduction, Ms. Krapulis talked about her son to set the tone that it was alright to share personal and family worlds with others. By the bell, three or four students had taken the opportunity to introduce themselves.

School was over, so we took a few moments to debrief. Ms. Krapulis focused on the responses that the students had to reducing competition amongst themselves. She remembered that earlier in the year, students had said to her that the students in her class were headed for Rikers Island that African Americans couldn't learn Spanish and that some students already knew they were going to fail. She said that she felt sad that some students did not think they could pass. Mr. Hale, had joined us and he thanked me for being there, and said he couldn't believe that he had seen those students be so behaved. We ended the session looking forward to the CFP the next day.

The following day, Ms. Krapulis did not show for the third CFP class. I was devastated that she did not show up. The third theme is critical in the development of partners. This meant that she would get the information, but not necessarily the experience of the theme for herself. The CFP class were creating themselves as a team, and inventing the conditions to work together. She was missing all of it. On Wednesday, I got an email from her:

> Sorry, I missed class yesterday and we did not have a chance to discuss further. My kids walked into class looking for you and a few asked for you! They're a bit more settled. There's toned down talking across; more self-acknowledging (as a group) of their role in class and what they should be doing, and I have become more 'approachable' to them, i.e. they'll chat with me before and after class and in hallway.
>
> More interesting though, today there was an incident during class. About two thirds of the students were actually involved in the subject matter. (It could have been that we were all waiting the arrival of the district superintendent). They were participating and writing when, someone threw a pencil and hit my arm as I had just

turned toward the board and was midway in writing a word. Since no one claimed responsibility, even following my 'spiel' about how, I was so disappointed in their behavior and that I never fathomed that anyone in the group would actually do something like this.....I called for the security guard.

Well, no one stood up. I kept them in detention during the noon recess (15 minutes) along with their homeroom teacher. (By the way, he gave them a "you are on the way to becoming a statistic: high school drop out and potentially worse by acting like jerks again....") Following an exercise in writing *if they saw anyone throw the pencil*....one name did come up in almost all instances.....GUESS: he was absent on Monday!! The 'case' is still open because the student swore to me, in a private conversation after school, he didn't do it but since everyone ratted him out he didn't want to say anything but .... he blamed Bob (pseudonym) (the candidate for most likely to).

Ade, what is next week's activity with them? This week is somewhat easier to contact me, I'm a bit under the weather (I'm nursing a cold) and I run home right after work. ...shalom

On Friday we had our first weekly phone call. The call lasted about two hours. Ms. Krapulis had a lot to say. She shared about her wasted days at school and how tired she was. She had four classes back to back one day. It was class picture day. She had to escort each class back and forth to the auditorium, down and up four flights, four different times, except for the first two periods. No Spanish was taught that day. She hated the unbelievable amount of time wasted. Last year in her smaller school, there was more organization.

I asked her, who do you see when you see these students? She responded with, They remind me of students in the 2nd school that I taught in - leave them on a Friday, and Monday find out that they got placed in Spofford Detention Center, or they come in with scars from knife wounds. These [8C] students represent

> the sweet and innocent turning into and waiting for adolescence to kick in. From sweet boys and girls, to thinking that they can make it on their own. Watch the way they dress, do their hair. You begin to hear words that they're thinking about dropping out because they're not going to make it. See that look in their eyes? Off into their own world. I see a middle aged man - close to retirement age who's tired of life, given up - bored with it all.

Ms. Krapulis went on to say that 8C reminded her of a class of 10th graders who she saw drop out - who she saw like souls floating around in the hallway, physically there, but their essence was not present. She recognized that Joe, had initiated a conversation with her this week for the first time. This was not Joe 'the trouble maker'. She said now, when she sees students walk into class, she sees them as her kids.

Looking back at the Monday session, she recognized that it was the first time students allowed her to see them for real, allowed her to see their world. She recounted that the homeroom teacher said to a boy: "You're on your way to becoming a statistic, if you don't do your work. People will see that you're a black man and you will be seen as a perpetrator, not a victim."

Ms. Krapulis had much to muse over and I listened as she asked rhetorically, is it a strategy or incompetence on the part of educators, economics or a myth that college is a path for everyone? People don't value skills, repairmen, vocational skills. Students have to show intellectual skills, or otherwise be regarded as retarded.

I asked her what it means to be absent? She responded with,

> Students use it as an excuse to get out of doing an assignment. You know I was absent! Ideally, the student is responsible to find out what they missed.

This was a great moment for me, that she could see herself in this conversation, reflect on it, and promise to find out from one of the co-leaders what she had missed at the CFP session.

Then, Ms. Krapulis took me on a journey concerning the negatives of student backpacks. Her insights had me laughing out loud.

> She said, backpacks are rats nests - highly disorganized. Like pushing dirty laundry into a bag - just shove it in. Students have no knowledge nor appreciation of what it took for me to produce those homework assignment papers. I'm looking for another job. Why am I staying here? I could write the tragic backpack comedy. They are mountain climber's gear, marketed to school kids. They're not designed for organization. There are no divisions. It holds sandwiches and soda bottles. "La Mochena" curves the back abnormally with heavy books. She shared that she had studied Reiki, the art of hands-on healing, and that from a spiritual perspective when students have backaches, it could not only be from backpacks, but from fears of not going to make it, and pressure. She felt that these kids were much more spiritual than white kids. "Sometimes I touch them with the intention to calm them down. Some realize the touch."

Ms. Krapulis acknowledged that she had gotten her first paycheck. She had told her students that the check was six weeks late due to a bureaucratic mess-up. She was also aware of her mood of resentfulness to the whole situation.

At the end of the call, I was satisfied that she and I had forged a learning partnership, and that she was on the road to create partnership with her students. I had observed that in the classroom she operated in the teacher control paradigm, and there would be opportunities to support her to let students generate, instead of telling them. She also was perhaps uncomfortable with delivering the curriculum as it was developed, or she did things her way. In addition, I had witnessed shifts occur in that she saw students, as *her* kids now, that her student, Bob, had initiated a conversation with her, that she had taken responsibility for being absent, (and in time could see that as she does, so do the students), and lastly, that she was fully expressing herself.

These were indicators that learning partnerships were in the making. Although exhausted for the moment, I looked forward to being with her and her students on Monday.

Subsequent visits to Ms. Krapulis' classroom

On the following Monday, the class rearranged themselves with ease into an oval. A female student suggested that the thing to do was for everyone to introduce themselves. Ms. Krapulis ignored her suggestion - when the student was giving her the exact agenda for the session. I supported Ms. Krapulis to recall the possibilities of the course and wrote them on the board. With the CFP lesson binder in hand and sitting in the circle, she asked that each student to chose one of the possibilities. Then, she began to field the introductions. Her reaction to silly introductions was silence, smirks, staring straight at the student(s), but there was no laughter on her part, just a monotone and serious demeanor. By the bell, all but 3 or 4 students had introduced themselves.

There was no time for a debrief conversation, because Ms. Krapulis had to attend a teacher s meeting. I recognized that the she had missed an opportunity to share the leadership of the session when the student suggested an agenda. I also was aware that we could have had fun doing this session, but the teaching mood that Ms. Krapulis modeled was to be serious. Smart remarks were taken as offensive. Her upsets would be keys to unlocking her beliefs about herself as a teacher.

Following that week's CFP, Ms. Krapulis was not home on Friday for our weekly call. The next Monday was constantly interrupted by one of the boys playing tauntingly with a yo-yo, throughout the visualization process of theme 2. The session did not go as developed. Ms. Krapulis was very upset. To support her to release her upset, I asked her to complete a statement and answer two questions. She wrote, I resent when I speak, there is cross talking; that I have to start feeling fear from some students, e.g. Emil; that a handful of students take control and the others allow it; having had so much formal "schooling" and winding up in this moment; that I have to find a way around this mess in order to get to a

clearing; feeling ready to explode like a human grenade because I feel no personal/individual animosity to those children. The first question was answered in quick fashion, what stops me from fully expressing myself is avoiding outside interference, i.e. administrators, or parents' complaints; I expect them [students] to finally get it and understand why they're in here; I expect my job is only that of teaching and not being a disciplinarian. She replied to the final question with my being fully expressed looks like I am smiling, walking around the room and I am speaking in a melodious, normal tone of voice while I enjoy listening to them [students] work.

I thought that writing the responses helped cool her out. These responses gave me the unfulfilled expectations and thwarted intentions that were constantly causing her stress. Life in the classroom was not at all like she imagined it should be. She offered me a mountain of stuff to help her unravel the nature of her relationships with colleagues, the real job description of a teacher in an inner city school, having a network of professional support, and developing ways to unwind.

A Dropout in the making

The next day Ms. Krapulis was absent from a CFP session for the second time. According to the excessive absence policy of the course, she had abdicated her tuition and been dropped from the course. On Wednesday, she confirmed that she had withdrawn from the course, and being my case study teacher.

On reflecting with me on the phone, she said that her decision to withdraw had to do with a cornucopia of feelings and interpretations beginning with her holding-in wanting to scream at the hypocrisy of her CFP classmates in the third session, how dare they act like they knew prescriptions for every problem. She just wanted to be taught classroom management and not have it be experiential nor part of a support group. She thought the CFP would be a quick fix to have a managed classroom. She felt spied on by the teacher mentor and did not trust the Principal. She feared that she was being molded into a Board of Education teacher who acts like a bureaucrat, accepts any classroom assignment, and exercises no integrity about which subjects she teaches.

Ultimately, when she considered that she could accept the situation as a challenge and go for it, she recommitted to the course, rather than run away.

At this point, I thought I had chosen the teacher from Pluto to be my case study. If there was ever a test, Ms. Krapulis was it for me. Her missing CFP sessions meant that I had to train her in delivering the development of the themes she missed. As much as I wanted to complete this project, I still had a family and intense work demanding my time. I too, had to recommit to completing this eight weeks.

Following visits to Ms. Krapulis' classroom

On the next Monday session, Ms. Krapulis had organized and supplied the students with glue, paper, magazines and scissors. She was moving around the room encouraging the students to cut, paste, and make their success maps. She played music on the radio that the students liked. She did not have the CFP binder in her hands.

Her email that week started off thanking me for the meditation that I did with the students prior to their visualization. She said that the experience had set her on a regular course of at-home meditation before going to sleep at night. The practice had helped tremendously to boost her physical and emotional health. An example of this occurred during the week's parent-teacher conferences when she had the insight to cut down on her caffeine intake and instead, took a thermos of herbal tea (a concoction of chamomile, linden, hisbiscus~rosehip and anise).

When a parent confronted her and made a scene, Ms. Krapulis said, I stood like a proud and mute peacock and took all the shit! I was able to handle the situation in a cool, calm, wise and professional manner. At least the parent listened to my suggestion to set an appointment with the principal but he refused and backed me up 100%. I later found out from 'veteran colleagues that this parent tries this bully act every year on a different teacher. By the way, her daughter is a sweet, somewhat cooperative student

who whines her way through class about not being able to do the work, but prefers to cheat on tests and goes home with a totally different scenario!

She had extended the work on the success maps into the following day and was surprised that the students wanted to be movie stars and make millions of dollars. To her, they seemed to live in fantasy world. She had asked the students to write their futures in English, followed by Spanish. Unexpectedly, and quite out of the ordinary, one student had said to her "Ms. Krapulis I am confused." She took the question as a wonderful request for support.

During our weekly call, she reflected on how 7th and 8th grade was for her. Being an only child, school was the only place to interact with her peers. She loved school. It offered her another point of view about life besides her parents. She loved to read. It gave her an opportunity to tune out.

The reflective process was in full operation with Ms. Krapulis. The practices of learning partnerships were happening. I could see in her teaching a new opening of her appreciation for the world of her students, their music, their concerns, and insight that her life practices could shift to better handle the stress of teaching. Then too, there was the breakthrough with the Principal supporting her at the parent teacher conference, plus a subtle entry into sharing with her colleagues.

On the Fifth Monday Ms. Krapulis was working with only ten students (without the CFP binder). The others were presumably attending John Glenn's ticker tape parade. As I entered the class later than expected, she said in a playful mood "I thought you were playing hooky like the others attending the Parade." Her students were busy cutting pictures to make success maps. Ms. Krapulis was busy dispensing glue, reading their papers and giving suggestions. She was picking cuttings off the floor, constantly moving about. I asked her about the music. She hooked the cord to the boom box and asked loudly "What's that station you always want me to play?" The students responded with "Hot 97!" That's what she turned on. Minutes later someone changed the station. Ms. Krapulis let it be.

She called for students to present their maps to the class. She looked at me for support. I suggested five chairs be put up front. She put five chairs up front. Seeing that students were still cutting and pasting, she asked who was finished. Four students came forward. In the midst of this, an administrative person walked in, gave Ms. Krapulis an envelope and a paper to sign, and started small talk (oblivious to the class in progress). I helped the second student hold up his map and asked the class to applaud after he'd finished speaking. Ms. Krapulis assisted the third student in the same way. She announced that all maps would be posted on the bulletin boards, including her own.

On entering the classroom on Friday of the same week, I noticed six maps on display. Ms. Krapulis proceeded with theme #3. She stumbled through the lesson, book in hand. She started by asking what they wanted by June, but used the responses as if they were conditions for workability. She really didn't have the attention of most of the students, except intermittently. This session went quickly.

The following Monday I observed Ms. Krapulis conduct a Spanish lesson. The students were playful, but read in turn, out loud. Ms. Krapulis called on different people to read. I suggested that she call on a student who was very reserved, but who had done her map. She called on this student who stumbled through the reading while accepting help from another student. Then on the second try, she read it on her own. Ms. Krapulis was very surprised and pleased. She acknowledged both students for their participation.

On our weekly call Ms. Krapulis related an incident around the fire drill on Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. This was the semester's first fire drill. Three boys created an unsafe condition: one by hiding in the closet, while the other two played leap frog around her desk. She sent them to the Principal's office. Shortly afterwards, to her dismay, all three were back in her classroom. She said, I never know when the Principal is backing me or not. Process of suspension is not powerful. What students say, goes.

She acknowledged that she *use to be* frightened that the Principal would say that no learning was going on when the students were in the sharing circle.

In my final observation session later that week, Ms. Krapulis began theme #3 anew. After having spent two hours on the phone with me to prep for this lesson, she was prepared,. Her energy was high. She moved around the room, and sat mostly in the middle of the clustered quartets of tables. She primarily ignored the students' playfulness and kept asking questions of the students. When she asked who wanted to pass Spanish, to her surprise everyone in the room wanted to pass Spanish. No one mumbled, it doesn't matter! or who cares?

The itinerant CFP student

"If there is a black hole on the other side of the school door, I think I fell into it today." Few teachers have been as poignant and graphic as Ms. Krapulis concerning their mood after a day of teaching. She attended the first two CFP sessions, was absent for the third class due to sickness, and was on time for the fourth session. The day after missing the fifth session, she gave notice that she had withdrawn from the course. On rejoining the course, the CFP facilitators had to get special permission from the UFT for her to continue with full benefits.

She attended sessions six and seven, but did not bring in her assignment as promised. In session eight she shared her map assignment with the class. Her midterm was submitted two weeks late. It was an A paper written on the principle, *There are no bad children. Children make bad choices and take bad actions.* Her midterm focused on a student who threw paper balls during class. While on the home front, he single handily managed to care for his mom who was in an early stage of the AIDS disease.

In the eighth session she spoke up strongly about the importance of creating dependable relationships with the custodian and security officers. She wanted to be safe in her classroom. In the ninth class she supported an immigrant teacher from the Balkan States to recognize the importance of cultural differences, and student perceptions, standards and values that did not

match hers. During a bathroom break , Ms. Krapulis talked with a classmate the entire time. This was the most extended personal conversation she had ever had with a classmate.

In presenting her class assignment, she exhibited the success maps (from theme #2) by three of her students. She shared about her Ghanaian student, who had not spoken in class since September. Ms. Krapulis was animated in sharing that I had encouraged her to call on this student to participate in the Spanish lesson. She now thought that student could become the doctor on her success map. After all, Ms. Krapulis said that she had the makings of being a doctor , because the student was neat, quiet and orderly, to name a few things. She remarked that living in the neighborhood in which she teaches was very important. The students' family could see that she was not only their teacher, but also their neighbor. Bumping into parents in the supermarket and talking about school was something she looked forward to doing.

Ms. Krapulis's perceptions of the changes she had gone through in the past seven weeks were expressed in the following email:

> Before, all my colleagues were incompetent. Now, some I see more as "buddies" and three of them as professionals in their field. The rest I still perceive as whining, wanna be professionals who couldn't do better in life. I do make it a point to share my lunch hour with different people during the week and encourage others to join me. We discuss our students more openly in such informal settings than during a regular staff meeting.
>
> Before, all students were freaking crazy, undisciplined bad excuses of the youth of tomorrow. Now, each individual carries a different world within. Some are able to tap into their individuality even if for a few minutes; but most try to outdo each other in being the "baddest". But, I'd still like to send some away to military schools if possible.
>
> Before, I was saying to myself, let me get my act together and devote my outside energies to move on to another job and SOON! I am holding me back at

this moment by allowing myself to be pulled into the whining energy. There's still a real world out there and I want to be a part of it. Now, I think that maybe the kids' talk of failure and how they keep themselves back showed some light into my own world. I notice that I may have encountered more jaded and violent students in previous schools but someone is bound to pull a new one even 20 years from now. I am more open about myself with students in general, but still cannot bare myself to the particular group you observe. I feel that I can't trust them.

I began employing new 'tricks' in class, such as, allowing moments of listening to local Spanish speaking radio stations and playing some music the kids like, at the expense of feeling my stomach turning at the "noise"; I returned to "cooperative learning" grouping in the hope of creating some sense of camaraderie among us; I tended to sit down more (at their tables vs. my desk) and check their work on eye level; I returned to playing videos relevant to curriculum; I became less afraid to devote some class periods to English language arts to compensate for some of the language weaknesses they bring to class. [Most have very little (English) language skills to transpose into another language. Those who are Arab dominant and had primary schooling in Egypt or Yemen are doing quite well in Spanish!]; and I found myself screaming relatively less but walking around more in an attempt to get their attention and settle them.

V. Conclusion

Other occurrences

In comparing the difference in responses to the questionnaires, the students focused on learning Spanish and Mrs. Krapulis' teaching, while Ms. Krapulis focused her limits to tolerating the students behavior. She thought that the students' behavior was a personal attack, when students were playing around. The students were just doing what they've been doing all through school with any teacher - with a little more intensity, since the hormones were now active. Mrs. Krapulis was trying to control behavior, and she could have turned recurrent play into a Spanish lessons.

In one of our weekly telephone conversations, Mrs. Krapulis told me that she had asked a colleague, who was a special education teacher, to coach her to be more effective with her 4th grade special education class. She acknowledged that her integrity had been out in taking the morning job just for the money. She really wanted to support those students, as well as make the extra salary.

Insights

The changes that I observed Mrs. Krapulis going through, can be observed through the declarations that gave rise to her actions with colleagues and students, and her developing competence with the reflective process. For example, the influences of her family culture and traditions gave her strong declarations. These were visible in her struggle to succeed as a female, career professional, which was demonstrated in her fights to avoid being dominated by men and employers. Initially, her screaming for discipline, and no-fun attitude set the tone for the classroom environment. Her negative assessments about colleagues and her students influenced 0 her mood, tone and limited the horizon of her possibilities. Consider her assessment of the Principal as being untrustworthy and that she could be fired without warning. Mrs. Krapulis'

distrusting mood, caused her to imagine that the teacher mentor was a spy for the Principal. Whenever he was present, she became the tone of dictating seriousness. As she began to learn about her students and reflect on her own life, these declarations began to dissipate.

Her decision to stand for herself by herself was prevalent in her relationships with colleagues and with herself, in that she was building a legacy to quit, rather than seek support form others. She had quit her corporate job, was quitting the teachers' union, and quit the CFP course twice.

Mrs. Krapulis began to connect with students after reflecting on what school meant to her as an eighth grader. In doing so, she began to open up to the realities of her students, as reflected in her midterm paper. Her reflection on her own integrity, led her to get coaching to teach special education classes. She entered into the world of students music, like it was noise. However, as she reflected on her commitment to having students win, the music became a support and not a nuisance.

Implications

Through this case study and learning situation that Mrs. Krapulis presented to me, I am empowered with the following conclusions in adjusting the design of the Curriculum for Possibilities course. A carefully constructed one-on-one teacher coach relationship could make a big difference to develop a self-confident and competent practitioner of the CFP pedagogy. The self-reflective process ought to be embedded in the course. A couple of ways to do this, is either through written journal writing and/or debriefing telephone calls. The value of this is important enough to consider replacing the midterm and final exams with a class assignment to turn in a completed journal. Another structural support I recommend is to get a baseline assessment of the teacher's class from the Principal, and at midterm his/her observations of the difference the course is making. Then, at completion get a final assessment from the Principal. Exposure to the students worlds of music, clothes, media, and relationships would open the possibility for teachers

to connect with students. On the flip side, students tend to share themselves according to the level that teacher's do. I would suggest the curriculum indicates places where it is appropriate for teachers to discuss their lives. Lastly, speaking about the power of declarations and the reflective process could be included in the way CFP is presented, to give teachers clarity about the central focus of the curriculum. The promptness teachers manage completing assignments needs to be addressed as a direct correlation to the way their students do homework, prepare for tests, manage multiple tasks, etc. In this respect, the CFP must support teachers to stay up with the assignments, and this may necessitate creating CFP teacher mentors, who can make coaching and clearing calls, between CFP sessions. The CFP teacher mentors could be enrolled from the previous graduating class, as a help to keeping them sharp and in action.

When I asked Mrs. Krapulis for her end of school year predictions, she forecast the following about her eighth graders: 30% would go to the High Schools (other than zone school) of their choice, 53% would go to their zone High School (not their choice), and 17% would drop out, be institutionalized or have to repeat 8th grade. She predicts that 17% would have a breakthrough to accomplish grades beyond their expectations. It will be interesting to return in June to compare her predictions to actual outcomes.

Personal reflections

Creating a learning partnership with Mrs. Krapulis called me to listen to not just a teacher going through changes of teaching, but to a whole person with a complex flurry of concerns. My job turned out to be able to distinguish what support Mrs. Krapulis needed to forward the action of getting her CFP assignments done. There were telephone calls that I thought would be 30 minutes that became two hours. There were stories and lots of anecdotes that gave life to this teacher's developing passion. Who else did she have to talk to?

The students were my joy. Each of them became a special possibility for breakthrough to me. Many appeared like cloaked starships, waiting for the right environment to reveal themselves. I

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sometimes had a hard time, not to intervene in Mrs. Krapulis process to practice delivering the CFP. If any lesson recurrently prevailed, it was not to make my partners wrong. Accept everything they gave me as fuel for the process to unfold.

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